FBI Clerks Rejoining Class After AU Apology to Hoover

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By Martin Weil
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At least five of 11 FBI clerks who were reportedly ordered to drop an American University course because of the instructor's allegedly derogatory comment on J. Edgar Hoover, have re-enrolled, university officials said.

University President George H. Williams said he received a letter last week from FBI Director Hoover in which the "indication is . . . that the men who withdrew or were withdrawn are free to return if they wish to do so."

The course in question, "Violence in America," is taught in the university's center for the administration of justice, by Thomas Rose, a part-time instructor. Most of the 1300 students in the center are law enforcement officers.

Williams said he wrote Hoover last month expressing "regret on my part that statements were made (in the class) that either directly or by innuendo reflected in a personal way (on) Mr. Hoover."

He also said in an interview that he urged in his letter to Hoover that "these men who had been directed to withdraw be permitted to return . . ."

Hugh Nugent, director of the center, said, "I've seen re-enrollment papers for five . . ." He also said he is "not sure all 11 (of the FBI clerks enrolled in the course) ever dropped. Maybe eight or nine did."

An FBI spokesman declined comment on the situation yesterday.

University officials said it stemmed from an Oct. 6 incident in which Rose referred to Hoover in suggesting possible guest speakers for the class, which has about 55 students.

Rose, who teaches full time at Hood College in Frederick, Md., has declined to say what he said.

Dean Herbert E. Striner, whose College of Continuing Education includes both the center and Rose's course, said the instructor made "what he thought was an off-hand, humorous remark," not aimed at impugning character.

Nugent said he spoke Oct. 14 to an FBI personnel official who told him it was mandatory for the 11 clerks to drop Rose's course, and he told a reporter Oct. 29 that the FBI had called Rose's remarks "derogatory."

Nine days after being told that it was mandatory for FBI clerks to drop the course, Nugent said, another FBI official gave him the impression that the clerks were free to do as they chose.

Clerks started re-enrolling "about the 2d or 3d of November," he said.

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Nugent said he never received any written notice that the students were required to drop the course and the students "never told me they'd been ordered to drop."

Williams said Hoover's letter gave no indication that the students had ever been ordered to withdraw.

In another incident, 15 FBI agents dropped out of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York last month because a professor criticized the bureau, according to college president Donald H. Riddle.

He said yesterday the agents had not returned.